



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

A  
PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE,

PUBLICKLY ADDRESSED TO THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,

*In Boston, on the eighth of November, M,DCC,LXXX : when  
the PRESIDENT was inducted into Office.*

BY JAMES BOWDOIN, ESQUIRE,  
PRESIDENT of the ACADEMY.

GENTLEMEN of the AMERICAN ACADEMY of ARTS and SCIENCES !

WHEN I consider, that among the members of the Academy there are gentlemen of abilities superior to my own, especially in the walks of philosophy, I feel a consciousness, that its honours might in one instance have been better placed. But if a defect of abilities could be compensated by a good will to serve its interest, and promote the end of its institution, I should have the satisfaction to think myself not wholly unqualified for the station, with which your suffrages have honoured me.

It is in discharge of the duties of it, that I appear in this place : and in the discharge of them, both at present and on future occasions, as I greatly need it, so I doubt not I shall always experience your candour :—the candour, which ever accompanies generous minds, and is the result of the due exercise of the social affections.

The social affections in man are the principal source of his  
E happiness ;

---

N.B. At the desire of the Academy, expressed by their vote of the 8th of November, 1780, this Discourse was soon after published.

happinefs ; and the operation of them, as directed by his wants, and other circumstances, forms his connections in society. Their first objects, in the order of nature, are our relations and near friends ; next to these our neighbours and countrymen succeed ; then the people of other countries, in political connection with us ; and in the last place, mankind in general. In proportion, however, as these objects are more remote, those affections are the less powerful. After operating on their first objects in our family connections, and carrying us to the vicinity, they are drawn forth more particularly to such individuals as discover a likeness to ourselves in genius and disposition ; and appear to have interests co-incident with our own. The acquaintance thus begun, strengthens and improves by time ; and the pleasure and mutual benefits, resulting from it, prompt us to continue and enlarge it. These social circles increase with population, and at length occasion the establishment of societies, more effectually to secure those benefits, and render them permanent. But the social principle is of a nature so active and comprehensive, that it leads mankind to associate in larger bodies ; and to establish great communities, in which the strength and abilities of individuals being united and consolidated, each individual personally, as well as the community at large, may enjoy the security, and advantages resulting from that union.

Hence have originated government, and the various political connections, subservient and necessary to it. Hence, amidst a variety of others of different kinds, have sprung the numerous institutions for promoting philosophical knowledge, and investigating the works of nature : among which, some in *Europe*, and in particular, the Royal Academy of Sciences at *Paris*, and the Royal Society of *London*, bear a distinguished character.

Hence

Hence too, the societies of a similar nature, which begin to adorn *America* ; particularly the Philosophical Society at *Philadelphia*, whose first essays, so ingeniously executed, are received by us as a pledge for still nobler productions. It is hoped they will excite in this new-formed society, a generous ardour and emulation in the same laudable pursuits ; and that, as optic glasses, by collecting the solar rays, do assist and strengthen the corporeal sight, so the two societies, by centering in a proper focus the scattered rays of science, may aid and invigorate the intellectual : benefiting by their productions, not only the communities in which they are respectively instituted, but *America* and the world in general : both together resembling some copious river, whose branches, after refreshing the neighbouring region, unite their waters for the fertilizing a more extensive country.

The end and design of instituting this society are fully declared in the act of the legislature for its incorporation : namely, “ to promote and encourage the knowledge of the antiquities of *America*, and of the natural history of the country ; and to determine the uses, to which its various natural productions may be applied : to promote and encourage medical discoveries ; mathematical disquisitions ; philosophical enquiries and experiments ; astronomical, meteorological, and geographical observations ; improvements in agriculture, arts, manufactures and commerce ; and, in fine, to cultivate every art and science, which may tend to advance the interest, honour, dignity and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people.”

Here is opened a wide and extensive field, which the sons of literature are invited to cultivate and improve : a field of the richest soil, so varied in its qualities, as to be adapted to every mode

mode of cultivation. Here they will find abundant matter for the employment of their industry; and the most ample room for the exercise of their genius, in its utmost power of expansion.

Here they are directed to the fountain-heads of science, at which they are invited to recreate themselves; and of whose delicious waters they may drink without the danger of intoxication: or in case of danger, contrary to the effect of some other waters, it diminishes in proportion to the largeness of the draught: as intimated in the elegant lines of a well-known poet.

“ A little learning is a dangerous thing :  
 Drink deep, or taste not the pierian spring.  
 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain ;  
 And drinking largely sobers us again.”\*

We shall now take a cursory view of some of the subjects, which are to employ the enquiries and researches of this society; and which we shall notice in the order observed in the act for incorporating it: making, in our progress, a few observations, that naturally result from them.

The antiquities of *America*, † are the first mentioned.—A knowledge in the antiquities of a country necessarily implies a knowledge of its antient history; and the researches into them lead directly to the source and original of things.

It

\* *Pope's* essay on criticism.

† *Salve, magna parens frugum, Vespugia tellus,  
 Magna virum: tibi res antiquæ laudis et artis  
 Ingrediar, sanctos ausus recludere fontes.*

VIRG: GEORG: 2.

The *American Academy* is here personated; and the *res antiquæ laudis, &c.*—are to be considered as subjects of their future enquiry.

The compliment paid to our country by substituting *Vespugia* for *Saturnia*, it is hoped, will be as justly applicable to it as *Virgil's* was to *Italy*.

It is very pleasing and instructive—to recur back to the early ages of mankind, and trace the progressive state of nations and empires, from infancy to maturity, to old age, and dissolution:—to observe their origin, their growth and improvements, their different governments and laws, their variant customs and religion:—to observe the progress of the arts among them, which at first were few and rude, suggested by their wants and necessities, but gradually increasing in number and perfection, in proportion to the enlargement of the community, and as the culture of them was encouraged:—to observe the rise and gradual advancement of civilization, of science, of wealth, elegance, and politeness, until they had obtained the summit of their greatness:—to observe at this period the principle of mortality, produced by affluence and luxury, beginning to operate in them: manifesting itself with greater or less vigour in a variety of ways; and finally terminating in their dissolution, brought upon them by the vices attendant on luxury. Debilitated by these, and incapable of defending themselves against a vigorous invasion, their more hardy neighbours, invited by that circumstance, and perhaps irritated by the insolence, which national affluence and luxury inspire, invaded and subjugated them. In fine—to observe, after this catastrophe, a new face of things; new kingdoms and empires rising upon the ruins of the old; all of them to undergo like changes, and to suffer a similar dissolution.

Of these events ancient history exhibits the most convincing and instructive evidence: particularly the history of the four great empires, the *Assyrian*, the *Persian*, the *Macedonian*, and the *Roman*: which, like their founders, have long ago, suffered the fate incident to every thing human.

The

The knowledge of these events is so intimately connected with the knowledge of antiquities, that it is derived from the same source. Such too is the connection between ancient history and antiquities, and such the mutual assistance afforded to each other, that as, on the one hand, ancient history illustrates and explains antiquities, so, on the other, antiquities serve to verify and authenticate ancient history, or to correct its errors : and they sometimes give us a knowledge, or intimation of things, not recorded in history. Antiquities are also incidentally beneficial, by means of the political and other useful knowledge, resulting from the disquisitions necessary to explain them.

With respect to *America*,—there may be many things of *European* extraction, that come under the name and description of antiquities. So far as relate to general laws, customs and religion, they are, for the most part, homogeneous with what took place in the same age, and in the countries, from which the first *European* colonists emigrated ; and it is probable they may be learnt, or explained, by the general or antiquarian history of those countries. These things, together with what was peculiar to those emigrants, and worthy of notice, if not already recorded in *American* history, will, with other remains of antient times, be proper subjects of our enquiry.

Whatever relates to the aboriginal natives of *America*, not already noticed in history, may be comprized in a very narrow compass. Their want of civilization, and improvement, and in particular their total want of literature, by which the small degree of knowledge they acquired by experience, might have been transmitted to succeeding generations, will justify the opinion, that the present race of them, in manners and conduct, differ very little from their ancestors, who lived centuries ago : excepting in some few particulars, occasioned by  
their

their intercourse with foreigners. It may naturally be conjectured therefore, that the ancient and modern history of these people, with the exception of what might regard their wars, would appear but little more than a transcript of each other ; and that it would be in vain to search among them for antiquities.

It is not improbable however, there may be many ancient historical records, and other valuable remains of antiquity, both *American* and *European*, in the possession of descendants from families, which first settled *America* ; and of other persons upon this continent.. It were to be wished, that gentlemen possessed, or knowing, of such remains, or of any kind of collections likely to contain such, would cause them to be examined ; and if they tend to elucidate, enlarge, or correct history ; or in any other way can be beneficial to the public, that they would have the goodness to communicate to this society some account of them : which, at the same time it will characterize them benefactors to the public, will entitle them to the thanks of the society..

The subject next mentioned in the act is natural history.—The society are to encourage the knowledge of the natural history of the country, and to determine the uses, to which its various natural productions may be applied..

Natural history is a copious subject, or rather it includes a very great variety of subjects. The several classes of animals, vegetables, minerals and fossils—in short, every thing produced by nature, whether in the earth, the sea, or air, inclusive of these, are within its department.

The knowledge of it is so necessary to the good of mankind, that it has been cultivated in its several branches, perhaps more than any other part of science ; and in proportion to that cultivation,



vation, the properties and qualities of things, and their fitness for certain uses, have been discovered. This discovery has occasioned the application of them to those uses ; and those have led to others, according as the wants, or the inventive faculties of man have directed. Hence we have derived the conveniences and ornaments of life, and every improvement in the arts of living.

At first however, at the origination of man, when it was indispensibly necessary he should be supplied with the means of subsistence, before he had acquired sufficient knowledge and ability to provide for himself, his beneficent CREATOR, the first and the supremely great Naturalist, made known to him the nature and qualities of things, and the uses to which they might be applied, so far as man's well-being required ; and having provided for that, and endowed him with sufficient faculties, he was pleased to leave him and his posterity, to the exercise of those faculties, for the gaining a further degree in natural knowledge : in proportion to which, and to their improving it to the purposes, for which it was adapted, he intended their future accommodations should be. Accordingly, in different nations, from a greater or less exertion of equal faculties, or from a happier application of them, we find a greater or less degree of natural knowledge and improvements, and a proportionable difference in their respective conveniences and accommodations. Hence, with regard to these latter, the difference between *Europe* and *Africa* ; between the most improved, and best accommodated, of mankind, and the Hottentots. But if their natural faculties are unequal, collectively taken, as probably is the case, the reason of that difference will strike us the more forcibly.

On the supposition of such inequality, it may in a great measure be accounted for, by the operation of natural causes : for altho' before the dispersion of mankind over the earth, which their increased numbers made necessary, the human faculties, by reason of a sameness in situation and other circumstances, might in general be equal, yet in process of time an inequality would probably take place from a change of climate.

Different climates differ greatly in their degrees of heat and cold, as well as in their natural productions. The tendency of immoderate heat is to relax, unbrace, and debilitate the human frame, and thereby diminish the powers of the mind as well as body, and indispose them to exercise and application : which indisposition, strengthened by the force of habit, at length becomes insurmountable.—On the other hand, immoderate cold too much contracts, and gives too great a degree of rigidity to, the fibres, and nervous system ; and thereby making them less susceptible of quick and lively sensations, must proportionably affect the mind. Hence, in both cases, an inferiority of intellects. But in climates, dually tempered with heat and cold, where the organs of sense and motion are in due tone, it may be expected, if this theory be true, that mankind will be capable of greater exertions both of mind and body.\*

F

It

\* The Baron de *Montesquieu*, in his *Spirit of Laws*, † where he treats, Of the difference of men in different climates, although he considers the effect of climate, more as it relates to the passions, than to the understanding, supposes not only that the difference is owing to different degrees of heat and cold ; but that in proportion to them the body and mind are less or more vigorous.

If this be the case, what is said above respecting the effect of climates is not wholly just : for *there* it is supposed, that immoderate cold, as well as heat, diminishes the vigour of both.

The latter supposition may, in some measure, be supported by the history of the people living in the northern parts of *Norway*, *Sweden*, *Russia*, *Lapland*, and *Siberia*, whose characters, both as to mind and body, do not give us any exalted idea of the vigour or ability of either.

† Book xiv. chap. 2. *Nugent's* translation, the 2d. edit.

It will not from hence follow, that the exertions of different nations, dwelling in the same latitudes and climates, should be equal : for on the supposition of equality of capacity, there may be a variety of things, on which their exerting it may depend : such as education, religion, government, and other circumstances, or the appearance of some happy genius to instruct and direct them : and as these should happen to differ and influence them, their exertions would be proportionably different.

By way of illustration, \* we may instance in what has taken place among ourselves ; and ask, whether the people of these United States, whose natural capacity, without doubt, equals that of *Europeans* in the same temperate climates, would in certain different circumstances, have opposed the unreasonable claims of *Britain* upon them ? Would they, if at all, have exerted themselves so vigorously against her enslaving domination, if they had not been educated in the principles of liberty ; if their religion, like that of some sects among them, had not allowed them to make use of carnal weapons in the defence of their liberty ; or if they had lived under a despotic government, and believed in the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance ? Or, lastly, if some among them, well situated to observe the course and tendency of *British* policy, had not alarmed them of their danger ?

If all or any of these circumstances had been different from, or contrary to, what have in fact taken place, the advantages derived from climate, in reference to natural capacity, had probably

\* At the time of writing this discourse, the fleets and armies of *Britain* were, and long had been, invading us. This circumstance, together with the extraordinary manner, in which she conducted the war, occasioned in one or two of the political observations, adduced to illustrate the subject, some little poignancy of expression : which, it is apprehended, the occasion justified.

bly been lost ; and the world had not been astonished at the noble and unexpected exertions, we so happily made against the power of *Britain* : a power, distinguished for its magnitude, and with which we had to contend under the pressure of the greatest difficulties and discouragements.

One ardent wish will be indulged to me on this occasion, that we may ever deserve to be possessed of freedom and independence ; and by deserving them, convince our enemies, that the SUPREME ARBITER of the fate of nations will not suffer *Britain* to wrest them from us. The first of them—freedom—in a constitutional sense, while we remained connected with *Britain*, and until she spurned our repeated prayers to her for its restoration, was the only object of our exertions : and the latter—independence—wholly alien at that time from our inclinations, but now radicated in them, was the necessary effect of her obstinate injustice.

With respect to the Indian tribes of *America*, and the Blacks of *Africa*, if they descended from the same original stock, and are alike affected with the rest of mankind, they will partake of the advantages and disadvantages of climate in common with them : unless it be supposed, that the unexplored cause of the difference of colour may, in any measure, alter the effects of climate. If it doth not alter them, and if all nations in the same latitudes, considered in the gross, have equal capacities, the difference, that on comparison appears between them, must be casual ; arising from some certain adventitious circumstances, which take place in some of them, and not in others ; and which, as they arise, call those capacities into action, and thereby occasion that difference.

If by public encouragement, or by any other means, knowledge in general, and particularly natural knowledge, be supposed equal in any two or more nations, their different modes of applying it will produce very different effects ; which, taken together in each, may be equally valuable and useful : and if those effects come under the names of manufactures, they may be exchanged for each other to mutual benefit, even where the natural materials are the same in kind and quality : but where the materials differ in these respects, the greater must be the difference in those artificial productions, and the greater the benefit arising from the exchange.

The various productions, natural and artificial, of different countries, and the benefit resulting from a mutual exchange of them, give rise to commerce, navigation, and their attendants : in regard of which, the balance of advantage will always be in favour of that people, whose skill, industry, and cheapness of labour, enable them to manufacture and export, the greatest quantity of commodities : whether manufactured from the rough products of their own, or of other countries. And that balance, if the government of such a people be wisely administered, will give them a national superiority in riches, influence, and prosperity : which are principal objects with the honest and well-informed politician.

With respect to the natural productions of this country, they are perhaps as numerous as those of any other : but it doth not appear by any publications on the subject, that they have been examined to any great extent : so that our natural history is very imperfect, not only in relation to such productions as we have in common with other countries, but such as are peculiar to our  
own.

own. It is apprehended, however, that gentlemen of ingenuity and observation, have noticed and described many of them : and that their several descriptions and collections, brought into one stock, properly methodized and classed, would make a respectable figure ; and encourage further examinations and researches, in order to our obtaining an extensive, and well-digested body of *American* natural history. For a purpose so beneficial in itself, and so honorary to our country, it is hoped, such gentlemen will favour the Academy with their descriptions and collections ; and also with the result of their future researches, relative to the same subject.

These general observations, and particularly those concerning man, and the effects of climate, with the exception of some few of them incidentally made, come under the head, and are included in the idea, of natural history.

What has been said of the influence of climate, agrees in part with the doctrine of the celebrated *Montesquieu*.\* So far as it differs from him, it may need apology : but it is submitted to your candour, just as it stood written before I had consulted him on that subject.

To these cursory observations on the subject of antiquities and natural history, I must here put an end, as I shall stand in need of the remains of your patience and candour, while I make a few observations of a different kind : which, though not necessarily connected with the subjects, that fall under the consideration of the Academy, will not be deemed impertinent, or unsuitable to this occasion.

The instituting of this society, and the necessity there was, that it should be preceded by such an institution as *Harvard's*,  
naturally

\* See a foregoing marginal note.

naturally carry us back to the early times of this country, when *Harvard-College* was first founded. §

Our worthy ancestors, knowing from their own experience the advantages of a good education, very early, after their coming hither, provided the means of it for their children, and posterity ; and that excellent man, Mr. *Harvard*, made a large and generous bequest for that purpose : in consequence of which, the college was founded ; and in honour of him, and to perpetuate the remembrance of his generosity, his name was given to it. From that time to the present, it has been productive of the happiest effects ; and the influence and benefit of its instruction have been widely felt. Learning and the principles of good morals have been disseminated ; the arts and sciences cultivated ; and a spirit of freedom and enquiry promoted, and encouraged : in virtue of which, the best foundations have been laid for excellency in the learned professions.

All these have operated in so forcible and extensive a manner, that they have produced the other seminaries in *America*, established for the like noble purposes : so that our ALMA MATER may be justly considered as the remote parent of them all. I say, *our* ALMA MATER, not merely in relation to the members of this society, individually considered, most of whom, from her breasts, drew the nectareous milk of science, but in relation also to the complex body, the society itself : for, by her discipline, and unremitted inculcations, the way has been prepared for philosophical disquisitions, and an examen into the works of nature : without which, or some such preparatory discipline, this society could not have been formed : or being formed, could not have answered the end of its institution.

At

§ *Harvard-College* was founded in the year 1638 ; and the date of its first Charter was in 1642.

At the same time we are acknowledging our obligations to our ALMA MATER, justice demands the tribute of gratitude to her benefactors.

Foremost among these, stands the reverend *Harvard*; reverend by his profession, but much more so by real worth, and true dignity of character. By his generous bequest, and the spirit it inspired, the government was enabled to establish the college: which, by reason of the low state of the finances of the country, could not have been established without such assistance: so that he may justly be considered as the father and founder of the UNIVERSITY; and in that character his memory should be transmitted to posterity.

In the same catalogue also, the names of *Stoughton*, *Hollis*, *Holden*, *Hancock*, *Boylston* and *Hearsey*, whose vital part is disencumbered of its earthborn cottage, hold a distinguished place. Their noble and public-spirited benefactions, with those of other friends and encouragers of science, are at large recorded in the archives of the university; and therefore need not here be specifically enumerated.

Ye disembodied spirits, now “joined to the great majority,” if ye are conscious of what is transacting in this place, and will deign to regard it, permit us to express our gratitude to you, arising from a sense of the benefits already derived, and which are deriving, to individuals and the public, from your institutions and benefactions.

If divinity and morality—if the knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, and of the oriental and other languages—if mathematics, and natural, and experimental philosophy—if the medical art, the belles lettres, and literature in general—are beneficial to mankind, ye have not lived in vain: since, to promote the know-  
ledge



ledge of these has been the object of your aim in those institutions ; and your aim has been crowned with the most happy and extensive success. This has insured to you, at least in this country, universal approbation ; and your names will be remembered with honour, so long as literature shall be esteemed, or any vestige of it remain here.

Though wrapt in the shroud of death be your mortal part, ye still live, and through successive generations may ye continue to live, in the grateful breasts of your lettered sons.—Consecrated to fame, and born on its strongest pinions, may your memory reach to the remotest ages, expanding as it flies. And when ages cease to roll—when all things shall be ingulphed in vast eternity—when eternity itself shall be absorbed in the self-existence of the DEITY, may ye be blessed, as we humbly trust ye now are, supremely blessed, with the approbation of HIM, who gave you the means, and the will to do good. In fine, may your virtues, and excellent example, by inspiring imitation, procure such benefactions to *Harvard-College*, as to make it, in the most proper and extensive sense, an *University*.

With respect to its surviving benefactors, I shall not attempt to name or characterize them, as the doing it might offend their delicacy, or savour of adulation : they will however have the pleasing satisfaction to reflect, that the eulogium on the similar virtues of others, is an eulogium on their own : and a consciousness of merit will compel them, without hazarding the charge of a vain-glorious appropriation, to apply it to themselves.

To have said thus much on the subject of the college, will not, on this occasion, be deemed impertinent, as the instituting of it was, not merely consistent with the forming such a society as ours, but necessary to precede it ; and as the old institution  
may

may with propriety be reputed the genuine parent of the new one. Such is the connection between them, and such the dependence of this upon the other, that as most of its present members are sons of HARVARD, so its future vernacular members will probably, for the most part, be supplied from the same stock : at least so long as HARVARD'S sons shall continue to be distinguished for scientific accomplishments : which, it is fervently hoped, will be as long as science, or any trait of it, remains in the world : or as long as nature, the great subject of it, endures.

Derived from such a parentage, and animated by the noble example of other philosophical institutions, may this society contribute its full share to the common stock of knowledge ; and endeavour, by the most generous exertions, to answer the valuable purposes of its institution.

“ Rapt into future times,” and anticipating the history of our country, methinks I read in the admired pages of some *American Livy*, or *Thucydides*, to the following effect.

A century is now elapsed since the commencement of *American* independency. What led to it, and the remarkable events of the war, which preceded and followed it, have been already related in the course of this history.

It was not to be expected, that our ancestors, involved as they were in a civil war, could give any attention to literature and the sciences : but superior to their distresses, and animated by the generous principles, which liberty and independency inspire, they instituted the excellent society, called *The American Academy of Arts and Sciences*.

This society formed itself on the plan of the philosophical societies in *Europe*, adopting such rules, and principles of conduct

duct, as were best suited to answer the end of its institution. Among others, they laid it down as a fundamental principle, that as true physics must be founded on experiments, so all their enquiries should, as far as possible, be carried on, and directed by them. This method was strongly recommended by Sir *Francis Bacon*, “a genius born to embrace the whole compass of science, and justly styled, the first great reformer of philosophy,”\* It was adopted by succeeding philosophers, and particularly by the immortal *Newton*, whose system of philosophy, founded on the laws of nature, will for that reason be as durable as nature itself.

Taking these great characters for their guide, and influenced by their illustrious example, they proceeded on fact and observation, and did not admit of any reasonings or deductions, but such as clearly resulted from them. This has been the uniform practice of the society : whose members, from time to time, having been chosen from men of every country, from every class and profession, without any other distinction than was dictated by the dignity of their characters, by their morality, good sense, and professional abilities, we find in the printed transactions of the society, the best compositions on every subject, within the line of their department. We find in those transactions new facts, new observations and discoveries ; or old ones placed in a new light, and new deductions made from them.

They have particularly attended to such subjects as respected the growth, population, and improvement of their country : in which they have so happily succeeded, that we now see agriculture, manufactures, navigation and commerce, in a high degree  
of

\* *Mallet's* life of Lord Chancellor *Bacon*.

of cultivation ; and all of them making swift advances in improvement, as population increafes. In fhort, they have, agreeably to the declared end of their inftitution, “ cultivated every art and fcience, which might tend to advance the intereft and honour of their country, the dignity and happinefs of a free, independent, and virtuous people.”

This is demonftrably evident from the numerous volumes the fociety have publifhed of their tranfactions. Thefe volumes are a noble collection of ufeul knowledge ; and confidered together in their mifcellaneous ftate, ftrike the mind with a fplendour, refembling the galaxy in the heavens, derived from the combined light of countless myriads of conftellations : and like that too, when the feveral correfponding parts are viewed in their proper connections, they appear to be parts of a whole ; and to conftitute the moft ufeul fyftems : fyftems diftinguifhed by their beauty, regularity, and proportion.—Thus far our hiftorian.

May this prophetic hiftory be realized by fact, and may the tranfactions of this fociety juftify the future hiftorian, in giving it a character, like the one juft delineated : or rather, a character defervedly more exalted.

In the mean time, as the fociety is formed on the moft liberal principles, and is of no feft or party in philofophy, it wide extends its arms to embrace the fons of fcience of every denomination, and wherefoever found ; and with the warmth of fraternal affection invites them to a philofophical correfpondence : and they may be affured, their communications will be efteemed a favour, and duely acknowledged by the fociety.

I fhall clofe this difcourfe with a fhort reflection, refulting from one of the fubjects we have been confidering.

When

When we contemplate the works of nature, animate and inanimate, connected with our earth ; observe the immense number and variety of them ; their exquisite beauty and contrivance ; and the uses to which they are adapted :—when we raise our view to the heavens, and behold the beauteous and astonishing scenes they present to us—unnumbered worlds revolving in the immeasurable expanse ; systems beyond systems composing one boundless universe : and all of them, if we may argue from analogy, peopled with an endless variety of inhabitants :—When we contemplate these works of nature, which no human eloquence can adequately describe, they force upon us the idea of a SUPREME MIND, the consummately perfect author of them,—

“ *That* universal spirit, which informs,

“ Pervades, and actuates the wond’rous whole.”

In compare with whom his works, great and stupendous as they are, are “ nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.” But—though annihilated by the comparison, yet—viewed in themselves, they powerfully persuade us to exclaim, in the rapturous and sublime language of inspiration, “ Great and marvellous are thy works, LORD GOD almighty, in wisdom hast thou made them all.”

